

# Neighbourhood News



from the Bell Tower Community Association

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THE  
NEWPORT ROAD  
STREET PARTY'S BACK!  
SATURDAY 6 JULY  
1.00PM ONWARDS

Barbecue courtesy of the Moderation  
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Live music Quiz Dance session  
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## News in brief

- Refurbishment of the area's remaining cast iron lamp posts has unfortunately been delayed because the swan necks ordered by SSE for retrofit to the columns did not fit. We understand the work will be rescheduled when the replacements arrive.
- Network Rail have been contacting many Cardiff Road residents about encroachment of their gardens on to their land. At this stage we are unsure of the legal position - to ensure continued access it may turn out to be necessary for residents to negotiate individually.
- We are looking at options to save the Drews building from demolition including local listing.
- After the AGM our committee is unchanged: Jonathan Dart (Chair), Richard Chandler (Vice-Chair), David Neale (Secretary), Sandie Gill (Treasurer), Barbara Kendall, Julia Wink and Tony Newell. Andy and Len will continue as joint membership secretaries.

# Updated plans for SSE site unveiled

Berkeley Homes are planning to build nearly 200 houses and flats at the former Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) site in Vastern Road. The plans also include a direct walkway and cycle lane linking Vastern Road with Christchurch Bridge.

The developer is looking to demolish several buildings on the site and replace them with homes including blocks which could be as high as 11 storeys.



**NEW BLOCKS:** the proposed view from Vastern Road

Revised plans were shown at an exhibition on Wednesday 8 May. The developers have taken into account feedback from the last exhibition in February. Improvements include making the way through from Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road easier to navigate, giving the development more of a 'wharf' feel and lightening the view of the development from the river using yellow brickwork. Plans also show a small plaza near the end of Christchurch Bridge and a ground floor unit that could become a café.

Reading Civic Society and other groups are concerned about the proposal to demolish a locally listed building in Vastern Road but agree that the plans represent a significant improvement.

The developer is looking for feedback before a planning application is submitted to Reading Borough Council later this year.

The draft plans can be viewed online and comments can be made at [www.vasternroad.co.uk](http://www.vasternroad.co.uk).

*David Neale*

# Concern over huge Caversham Road development



**TOWERING OVER US:** a simulated view from outside the fire station in Caversham Road, and the 25-storey tower block next to the station

An outline planning application has been submitted for redevelopment of the former Royal Mail site in Caversham Road. 'Reading Metropolitan' would contain around 640 flats, along with townhouses, community space and a possible health centre.

The tallest building would rise to 25 storeys and will be next to the north entrance to the station facing a new station square. This building could have retail units at ground floor level.

The flats will include studios, one, two and three bedroom units and some of these would be affordable units. In addition to the apartments there would be a small number of town houses at ground level.

A community centre is planned towards the Caversham Road side of the scheme, and this may include a dental practice and GP surgery. There would be a number of basement parking spaces across the development.

The Bell Tower Community Association has concerns over the height and bulk of the buildings in Caversham Road and the dominance of the tall tower block over the area.

Residents in De Montfort and Lynmouth Roads would be even more affected, losing winter sunlight, and we expect to be working with them in challenging these proposals.

The developers seem to claim in their planning statement that outline permission including a 16-storey block that was granted in 2012 justifies an application to build a 25-storey block now, a claim that we would dispute. Another concern we have is that the townhouses would be surrounded by tall blocks and the railway embankment so would be unlikely to be desirable to live in. There are also serious concerns about the effects on local infrastructure.

Details and the opportunity to make comments can be found on the council's planning website at [planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb\\_PL/detail.asp?AltRef=182252](http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/detail.asp?AltRef=182252).

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